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Black Elected Officials and their Constituencies

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FOREWORD

In 1971, there were 1,860 black elected officials in the United States. That year, the Russell Sage Foundation commissioned a pioneering study by James E. Conyers and Walter L. Wallace to examine the demographic characteristics of these officials and their constituencies nationwide. That year, too, the Joint Center for Political Studies began compiling data for its annual publication, the National Roster of Black Elected Officials.

By 1980, there were 4,912 black elected officials. During 1980 and 1981, as part of its Roster project, the Joint Center surveyed current black officeholders to see whether and how the demographic patterns among them had changed. That research was funded by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation, under a grant to improve the center's capacity to gather data on black elected officials.

This monograph reports both the demographic characteristics of black elected officials and the impact of various election systems and other political and socioeconomic factors on the prospects for blacks seeking and winning elective office.

The research was conducted by Thomas E. Cavanagh and Denise Stockton under the supervision of Dr. Milton D. Morris, director of research at the Joint Center.

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Eddie N. Williams
President

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1960s witnessed the most dramatic political progress by the black community in American history. The passage of the Voting Rights Act eliminated most of the legal barriers to black political participation in the South, bringing to a close the era of poll taxes, literacy tests, and other vestiges of Jim Crow. At the same time, sweeping demographic changes facilitated the emergence of black political power in northern urban areas. By the end of the decade, black mayors and congressmen had become visible symbols of the capacity of the American political system to respond to minority aspirations at the polls.

The gains of recent years have been widespread. Between 1965 and 1982, the number of black elected officials increased tenfold, from about 500 to more than 5,100. During the seventies, the number of black elected officials increased sharply at every level of government: federal, state, and local (see Table 1). Blacks have now been elected to every major category of public office except the presidency, vice presidency, and governorship--and Californians came close to making Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley the nation's first elected black governor in November 1982.

In general, the most striking gains have come at lower levels of government. The category showing the largest single increase has been black county officials, whose numbers have grown by 405.4 percent since 1970 (Table 1). Other important strides have been registered in the numbers of municipal officials (up by 293.4 percent) and education officials (249.7 percent). More modest growth rates have been recorded for black judicial officials (up by 164.3 percent), state officials (98.8 percent), and members of Congress (80.0 percent).

Impressive as these gains are, however, they appear small when viewed from the perspective of the American political system as a whole. The 5,160 black elected officials identified in 1982 constitute only about 1 percent of all elected officials in the United States. Or, to put it another way, "For every 100,000

Table 1. Change in number of black elected officials by category of office, 1970–1982.

	Total BEOs		Federal		State		Substate regional		County		Municipal		Judicial/law enforcement		Education	
Year	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change	N	% Change
1970	1,469	—	10	—	169	—	—	—	92	—	623	—	213	—	362	—
1971	1,860	26.6	14	40.0	202	19.5	—	—	120	30.4	785	26.0	274	28.6	465	28.5
1972	2,264	21.7	14	0.0	210	3.9	—	—	176	46.6	932	18.3	263	−4.0	669	43.9
1973	2,621	15.7	16	14.3	240	14.3	—	—	211	19.8	1,053	12.9	334	27.0	767	14.7
1974	2,991	14.2	17	6.3	239	−0.4	—	—	242	14.7	1,360	29.2	340	1.8	793	3.4
1975	3,503	17.1	18	5.9	281	17.6	—	—	305	20.6	1,573	15.7	387	13.8	939	18.4
1976	3,979	13.6	18	0.0	281	0.0	30	—	355	16.4	1,889	20.1	412	6.5	994	5.9
1977	4,311	8.3	17	−5.6	299	6.4	33	9.1	381	7.3	2,083	10.3	447	8.5	1,051	5.7
1978	4,503	4.5	17	0.0	299	0.0	26	−21.2	410	7.6	2,159	3.6	454	1.6	1,138	8.3
1979	4,607	2.3	17	0.0	313	4.7	25	−3.8	398	−3.0	2,224	3.0	486	7.0	1,144	0.5
1980	4,912	6.6	17	0.0	323	3.2	25	0.0	451	13.3	2,356	5.9	526	8.2	1,214	6.1
1981	5,038	2.6	18	5.9	341	5.6	30	20.0	449	−0.4	2,384	1.9	549	4.4	1,267	4.4
1982	5,160	2.4	18	0.0	336	−1.5	61	103.0	465	3.6	2,451	2.8	563	2.6	1,266	−.08

Source: Joint Center for Political Studies (1982)

nonblacks, there are 224 nonblack officials. For every 100,000 black Americans, there are only 19 elected officials" (Williams, 1982:76-78). Furthermore, the annual rate of increase for black elected officials dropped from 26.6 percent in 1971 to 2.4 percent in 1982 (see Figure 1). The most dramatic period of expansion occurred between 1964 and 1972 (O'Loughlin, 1979), when "blacks rapidly filled elective offices in jurisdictions with substantial black populations, thereby creating an artificial annual rate of increase" (Williams, 1982:75). While the 1960s clearly represented a watershed in the political progress of black Americans, the 1970s can best be characterized as a period of consolidation.

In a pioneering study conducted in 1971, Conyers and Wallace (1976) collected a variety of data on the personal and political characteristics of black elected officials. The present report expands on that study, examining changes in the characteristics of black elected officials between 1971 and 1980. The report is organized around six principal questions:

1. What are the personal characteristics of the nation's black elected officials?

2. How are they distributed among regions and types of offices?

3. What are their political affiliations?

4. Were they elected in partisan or nonpartisan elections?

5. What is the racial composition of their electoral jurisdictions?

6. How are their political prospects affected by different systems of representation?

This report is based on data collected between March and December of 1980 as part of the Joint Center's annual census of black elected officials. In March, questionnaires were mailed to each of the 4,607 black elected officials listed in the 1979 edition of the National Roster of Black Elected Officials. A follow-up questionnaire was sent to nonresponding officials in July 1980 (the questionnaire is attached as Appendix A). The overall return rate for the questionnaires was 34 percent, a typical response rate for a mail survey. The sample appears to be reasonably representative of the population of black elected officials in 1980 with respect to offices held and regional distribution, as can be seen from Tables 2 and 3, permitting reliable inferences concerning black elected officials in general from the sample population.

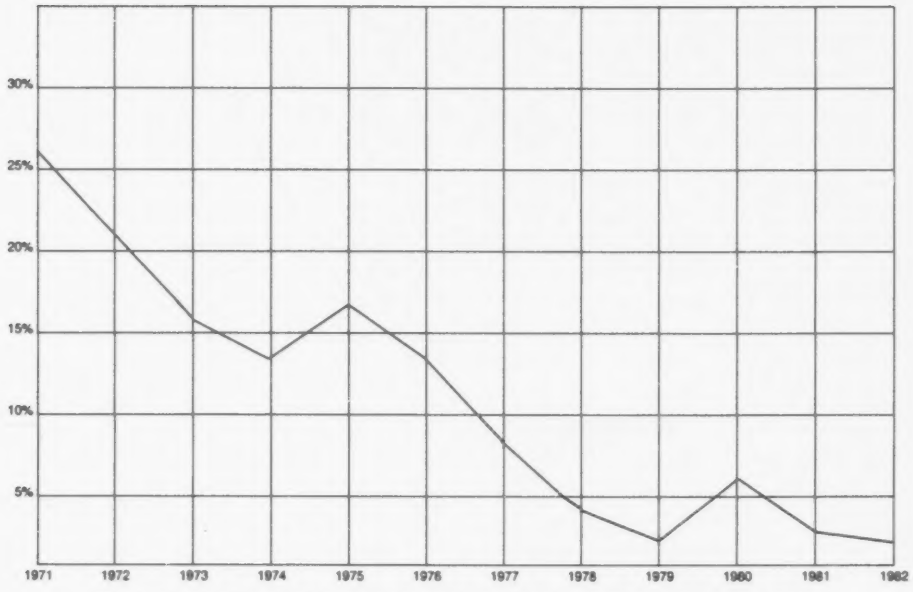


Figure 1. Annual rate of increase in number of black elected officials, 1971–1982.

Source: Joint Center for Political Studies (1982)

Table 2. Offices held by black elected officials in general and black elected officials in the sample, 1980 (percentages).

Office	Total Population	Sample
Federal		
Representative	0.4	0.5
State		
Administrator	0.1	0.3
Legislator	6.7	10.3
Substate Regional		
Director, Board Member	0.5	0.3
County		
Commissioner, Supervisor	7.6	6.5
Other	1.0	1.0
Municipal		
Mayor	3.8	5.8
Councilmember	36.8	34.8
Other	7.7	7.0
Judicial/Law Enforcement		
Judge	5.8	7.9
Magistrate, Justice of the Peace, Constable	3.7	3.2
Police Chief, Sheriff, Marshal	0.7	0.2
Other	0.4	0.4
Education		
State Agency Member	0.3	0.5
College Board Member	0.8	0.6
Local School Board Member	23.6	20.4
Other	0.2	0.3
Total	100.1	100.0
(N)	(4,607)	(1,523)

Table 3. Regional distribution of black elected officials in general and black elected officials in the sample, 1980 (percentages).

Region	Total Population	Sample
Northeast	12	13
North Central	22	23
South	60	56
West	6	8
Total	100	100
(N)	(4,607)	(1,553)

The profile of black elected officials is changing in several important respects. The following section of this report makes these points: First, substantially more black women held elective office in 1980 than in 1970. Second, the proportion of Democrats among black officeholders increased from its already high level during the 1970s. Third, since the most dramatic black electoral progress has been in the South, the geographic distribution of black elected officials has shifted. And finally, a greater proportion of black officials came from predominantly black electoral jurisdictions in 1980 than in prior years.

Other sections of this paper examine several factors that have a bearing on the prospects for black electoral success. They report the following findings:

- The presence of strong party organizations tends to lessen the recruitment of black candidates, although winning such an organization's endorsement can help to overcome the potential defection of white voters to a black candidate's opponent.

- Black candidates must generally rely on black votes in order to secure election. Lower-income blue-collar whites are most resistant to black candidates.

- Black representation is far more likely under a system of district elections than under an at-large electoral system.

- Finally, the socioeconomic level of the black community affects black electoral success by helping to determine the levels of voter registration, turnout, and campaign contributions, as well as the presence of an organizational network which can be mobilized for an election effort.

2. CHARACTERISTICS AND DISTRIBUTION OF BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS

Demographic Characteristics

Taken together, previous research efforts yield the following composite profile of black elected officials. During the 1970s, the typical black elected official was a male between 40 and 60 years of age. He was raised in a family of low socioeconomic status, as indicated by the educational and occupational level of his father (Conyers and Wallace, 1976:181; Fisher, 1978:36). Despite the austerity of his early family life, he was inculcated in the middle-class values of hard work, a good education, and religious morality--values considered indispensable for upward mobility in American society (Perry, 1977:19-20). The average black elected official went on to achieve a higher educational and occupational status than his father. He was college educated, held a graduate or professional degree, and was employed in a middle-class, white-collar occupation, and was a Democrat (Conyers and Wallace, 1976:181-183; Cole, 1977:41-43; Perry, 1977:19-20).

Data from the 1980 survey are similar to earlier research findings on the sex, age, and education of black elected officials. The data confirm earlier findings that blacks who hold elective office are primarily highly educated, middle-aged males (Cole, 1977; Conyers and Wallace, 1976; Fisher, 1978; Perry, 1977). The only significant change was in the proportion of women, which nearly doubled between 1970 and 1980, from 11 to 20 percent of all black officeholders. Women now make up a larger proportion of black elected officials than of elected officials in general; in 1981, only 11 percent of all American elected officials were women (Center for the American Woman and Politics, 1983).

Despite such signs of progress, evidence remains of lingering obstacles to black women in politics. In a study of city council membership, Karnig and Welch (1980) found that black males are more likely to be elected in areas with a sizable black

population and relatively high black income and education levels, while these relationships do not hold for black females. They conclude from this pattern, "Black resources are evidently directed at electing black males to office, as white resources predominantly elect white males" (Karnig and Welch, 1980:472). It will be interesting to see whether the newly apparent "gender gap" separating more liberal women from more conservative men encourages female bloc voting for increasing numbers of black women candidates in the years to come.

On average, black elected officials are more highly educated than the general population; the 1980 survey found that 63 percent held baccalaureate degrees in 1980, compared with only 16 percent of the total U.S. population aged twenty-five years and over, and only 8 percent of the black population in this age category. Only 5 percent of black elected officials had less than a high school education, while 50 percent of black adults and 33 percent of all U.S. adults had not completed high school. In their 1971 survey of officeholders, Conyers and Wallace (1976) found that black elected officials were more likely to be college graduates than white elected officials; this same finding was reported in a New Jersey case study (Cole 1977:42). Cole concludes:

> The black officials' educational high-jump implies a requirement to be "better" than whites to reach equivalent levels. Further, broadened political opportunity attracts more blacks. Though they were previously denied electoral opportunity, educated blacks now see fewer obstacles to success in politics than in other fields.

Geographic Distribution

The geographic distribution of the nation's black elected officials is closely tied to the distribution of the black population in the country. About 53 percent of the black people in the United States reside in the South, where 61 percent of all black elected officials also reside. The South is also the major growth area for electing blacks to office and accounts for fully two-thirds of the total increase in the number of black elected officials since 1970. Looked at another way, the number of southern black officeholders increased by 347 percent between 1970 and 1982, far exceeding the increases of 175 percent in the North Central states, 142 percent in the Northeast, and 137 percent in the West (see Table 4). The growth has been particularly impressive in the District of Columbia (due to the advent of home rule) and in such former bastions of segregation as Texas, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

Table 4. Change in number of black elected officials by region and state, 1970-1982.

State	1970	1982	Growth (percentage)
Northeast	238	577	+142.4
Connecticut	31	54	74.2
Maine	0	4	*
Massachusetts	8	28	250.0
New Hampshire	0	0	0.0
New Jersey	73	170	132.9
New York	75	192	56.0
Pennsylvania	49	123	151.0
Rhode Island	2	6	200.0
Vermont	0	0	0.0
North Central	396	1,090	175.3
Illinois	74	325	339.2
Indiana	30	67	123.3
Iowa	5	6	20.0
Kansas	6	26	333.3
Michigan	110	293	166.4
Minnesota	8	10	25.0
Missouri	65	147	126.2
Nebraska	2	6	200.0
North Dakota	0	0	0.0
Ohio	89	184	118.0
South Dakota	0	0	0.0
Wisconsin	7	16	128.6
South	703	3,140	346.7
Alabama	86	269	212.8
Arkansas	55	219	298.2
Delaware	9	22	144.4
District of Columbia	8	254	3,075.0
Florida	36	118	227.8
Georgia	40	271	577.5
Kentucky	41	79	92.7
Louisiana	64	372	481.3
Maryland	43	82	90.7
Mississippi	81	424	423.5
North Carolina	62	266	329.0
Oklahoma	36	82	127.8
South Carolina	38	235	518.4
Tennessee	38	127	234.2
Texas	29	207	613.8
Virginia	36	93	158.3
West Virginia	1	20	1,900.0
West	130	308	136.9
Alaska	1	2	100.0
Arizona	7	15	114.3
California	105	239	127.6
Colorado	7	14	100.0
Hawaii	1	2	100.0
Idaho	0	0	0.0
Montana	0	0	0.0
Nevada	3	8	166.7
New Mexico	3	6	100.0
Oregon	0	6	*
Utah	0	1	*
Washington	4	15	275.0
Wyoming	1	0	-100.0

Sources: Metropolitan Applied Research Center (1970); Joint Center for Political Studies (1982).

*not meaningful.

The dramatic increase in southern black elected officials is largely the result of the passage of the Voting Acts Right of 1965 and its enforcement since then. The abolition of legal barriers has been matched by an erosion of extralegal barriers to black political influence in the region. The recent emergence of viable black congressional candidates in such areas as the Mississippi Delta and the Durham and Columbia districts in the Carolinas may be the harbinger of major black electoral successes to come in the rural South.

America's black population is highly concentrated in metropolitan areas; as of the 1980 census, fully 57.8 percent of blacks lived in central cities, compared to only 25.0 percent of whites (O'Hare et al., 1982:21). Not surprisingly, all twenty-one black members of Congress represent urban constituencies. Three black representatives come from Chicago, three from New York City, and three from the Los Angeles area; there are two from Detroit; and one each from Baltimore, Cleveland, Gary, Houston, Kansas City, Memphis, Oakland, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and the District of Columbia.

Because the concentration of the black population in inner-city areas is continuing to increase, it is anticipated that these jurisdictions will prove to be a fertile ground for the election of black congressional representatives, state legislators, and particularly municipal officials for the rest of the century. A recently completed JCPS study estimates that the number of central cities with black majorities will increase from ten in 1980 to thirty-two by 1990 and fifty-three by the end of the century (O'Hare et al., 1982:34). The continuing population losses in these cities will reduce their allocation of congressional and state legislative seats somewhat, but blacks will probably hold a greater share of these seats. As we shall see, the black proportion of a jurisdiction's population is one of the most potent predictors of black electoral success, so the continuation of these demographic trends may presage a major increase in black political power.

Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the bulk of black mayors are serving in small rural towns. Of the 1982 total of 223 black mayors, only 26 were elected in cities with a population of 50,000 or more, and an additional 24 in cities with a population between 10,000 and 50,000. The remaining 173 preside over small cities, towns, villages, or unincorporated municipalities (Joint Center for Political Studies, 1982:xxi).

The average size of jurisdictions represented by black officials changed only slightly between 1971 and 1980. Table 5 shows an increase in the percentage of black elected officials representing relatively small election districts between 1971 and 1980. Over 55 percent of the officials were elected from juris-

dictions of 25,000 persons or less in 1980, compared to 46 percent in 1971.

Most black elected officials are Democrats, although a considerable number are elected on a nonpartisan basis. The predominance of Democrats among black officeholders has solidified during the past decade; the Democratic share of black elected officials has risen from 77 to 88 percent since 1971, while the Republican share has fallen from 13 to 6 percent (see Table 6).

Table 5. Population size of election jurisdictions represented by black elected officials, 1971 and 1980.

Population size	Percentage of black officials, 1971*	Percentage of black officials, 1980
Under 500	4	4
501-2,500	10	17
2,501-25,000	32	34
25,001-50,000	12	12
50,001-100,000	12	9
100,001-200,000	9	8
200,001-500,000	10	7
500,001-1,000,000	4	4
Over 1,000,000	6	5
Total	99	100
(N)	(732)	(1,276)

* Source: Conyers and Wallace (1976:66).

Table 6. Party affiliation of black elected officials, 1971 and 1980 (percentages).

Party	1971*	1980
Democrat	77	88
Republican	13	6
Independent and other	10	6
Total	100	100
(N)	(797)	(1,476)

*Source: Conyers and Wallace (1976:67).

3. FACTORS AFFECTING BLACK ELECTORAL SUCCESS

Party Politics

Political party organizations have traditionally played a major role in the recruitment, selection, and support of candidates for elective office at the state and local levels. However, the influence of party organizations in municipal elections was sharply curtailed in many cities by the widespread adoption of nonpartisan election systems at the turn of the century. Advocates of municipal reform sought to eliminate the corruption that characterized the party "machines," and in so doing, to encourage greater citizen participation in the governance of cities.

Partisan municipal ballots have both positive and negative implications for black candidates. On the positive side, black candidates often benefit from the endorsement and financial support the party can provide its candidates. Party organizations sometimes nominate black candidates to balance their tickets by representing various elements of the party (Banfield and Wilson, 1963). The party endorsement can be crucially important because voters are more inclined to vote along party lines than along ethnic lines when they are presented with a party ballot (Gordon, 1970; Karnig and Welch, 1980:26; Pomper, 1966:79-97). Conversely, the absence of a partisan ballot, which removes the possibility of straight-ticket voting, appears to increase the proportion of whites breaking party ranks to vote along ethnic lines instead (Banfield and Wilson, 1963; Gordon, 1970; Karnig and Welch, 1980:26; Pettigrew, 1976; Pomper, 1966:79-97).

On the other hand, the recruitment and election of black candidates is sometimes thwarted by party politics. Municipal reformers argue that party organizations often support groups with a long tradition of party allegiance, to the exclusion of newcomers and minorities (Karnig and Welch, 1980:25). There is also a danger that an entrenched party machine will coopt black leaders, keeping them in a dependent position through the dis-

pensation and withholding of patronage. Long-time black Chicago Congressman William Dawson is often considered the epitome of this "brokerage" form of leadership. During the 1960s, the black power movement brought forth a new leadership cadre more closely identified with civil rights issues and the concerns of the black lower class. Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell is often identified as an early pioneer in this more militant brand of leadership (Gelb, 1970:57-62; Stone, 1968:206; Wilson, 1960). Noting that Powell's ghetto-based organization flourished amid the decay of the Tammany Hall machine, Lee Sloan has asserted that "the probability that a black district will be able to elect a leader who will effectively represent their interests is highest in a ward-based, weak organization setting, next highest in a strong machine system, and lowest in a nonpartisan, at-large system" (Sloan, 1969:164).

The peculiar history of the South sometimes requires black candidates to circumvent party politics altogether. According to Howard N. Lee, the first black mayor of Chapel Hill, North Carolina:

> The real strength of the black politician in terms of getting people's support is not in the mainstream of either party but in pulling together a group of people who are on the party fringes, and who are dissatisfied with the old party ways. . . . Furthermore, a black candidate cannot successfully convince blacks that he is not a sell-out or that he will administer to their needs if he becomes tied to the party. Most southern party platforms reflect the attitudes and personalities of those who write them, who are usually southerners resisting change, people who have fought hardest against desegregation in any form. Lee, 1971:76

The gradual erosion of old-style southern courthouse politics may be outdating such considerations, however. The election of a black mayor in Prichard, Alabama, has been ascribed to effective grass-roots organizing and dissatisfaction with a long-time white incumbent; the local party leaders were largely irrelevant (Dean, 1973). In much of the South, blacks are now an integral part of the Democratic electoral coalition, and many white congressional and local candidates cannot attain office without black support.

Nonpartisan municipal elections are generally thought to favor the election of white elites at the expense of blacks and other minorities (Hawley, 1973:9). Several explanations have been offered for this apparent bias. First, the municipal reform movement brought about structural changes in electoral processes that aided older monied and professional elites in their attempt to recapture their control over city governments. These elites had

lost such control following the great immigration waves and the corruption of politics by industrial tycoons during the late nineteenth century (Barker and McCorry, 1976:100). Such innovations as periodic voter registration and nonpartisan elections may have reduced election fraud, but they also made it more difficult to mobilize the votes of poor whites and blacks who depended on party workers for political information (Hays, 1964:157-169). Blacks are also thought to do poorly in nonpartisan elections because demagoguery based on racial issues is more likely to occur in the absence of party constraints (Jaros and Mason, 1969:108). The polarization of communities along racial lines generally works against black candidates, especially in cities where the racial balance is close and black candidates must therefore obtain significant white support in order to secure election (Matthews and Prothro, 1963:28). Still another reason is that black candidates rarely have the ties to civic associations and leading newspapers that are essential in achieving public visibility and securing endorsements in a nonpartisan environment (Banfield and Wilson, 1963:158; Patterson, 1974:61).

Overall, the relationship between partisan electoral systems and the success of black candidacies is ambiguous. In what is probably the most sophisticated analysis to date, data were collected on 264 cities of over 25,000 population in which blacks made up 10 percent or more of the total population. This study found blacks were more likely to run for mayor and city council in nonpartisan election systems, presumably because under such systems there was no need to cultivate party organization ties. However, blacks are significantly more likely to be elected mayor in partisan systems. The authors interpret this pattern to suggest that "once on the ballot, blacks benefit from the partisan system" (Karnig and Welch, 1980:146). The implications for black political strategy are straightforward: if blacks can wield enough power in a local party organization to win a nomination, a partisan ballot system will work to their benefit, particularly in areas where blacks constitute a minority of the voting population and cannot win office on the basis of racial bloc voting.

Racial Composition of Jurisdictions

Black prospects for elective office are heavily affected by the racial composition of electoral jurisdictions. The black population as a percentage of the total population is regarded as one of the strongest predictors of black candidate success (Bullock, 1975; Cole, 1977:79; Conyers and Wallace, 1976:131-135; Darden, 1982; Engstrom and MacDonald, 1981; Karnig and Welch, 1980:32, 54-56; Latimer, 1979; Marshall and Meyer, 1975).

The relationship between the black proportion of the population and black electoral victory can be depicted as a curved line. In municipal elections, when blacks comprise 50 percent or more of the city population, the probability that a black mayoral or city council candidate will be elected is quite high (Cole, 1977:79; Karnig and Welch, 1980:54-56).

When blacks comprise a small proportion of a jurisdiction's population, such as 10 to 20 percent, black candidates receive more support from the white community and are more equitably represented on the city council than when the ratio of blacks to whites is closer to but still below parity. Resistance from the white community is most prevalent in areas in which blacks are a substantial minority (Conyers and Wallace, 1976:131-133; Murray and Vedlitz, 1978:33).

The pattern is reminiscent of the pattern of legal and extralegal barriers confronting southern blacks prior to the Voting Rights Act. Efforts to intimidate blacks and restrict their use of the ballot were most prevalent in those counties where blacks were close to a majority of the population, and these areas were noteworthy for very low black turnout (Campbell et al., 1960: 279-281; Matthews and Prothro, 1963).

This dynamic has been especially apparent in cities undergoing a dramatic transition in racial composition. The first mayoral race featuring a viable black candidate in such a setting generally produces an intense polarization of community opinion. Black turnout jumps dramatically, spurring a countermobilization among white voters; blacks support the black candidate overwhelmingly (i.e., by a margin of 90 percent or more), while whites vote heavily (i.e., by a margin of 80 percent or more) for the white candidate. Such was the pattern in Atlanta, Cleveland, Gary, Los Angeles, and Newark in elections that produced black mayors (Eisinger, 1980; Hadden et al., 1968; Halley et al., 1976; Jones, 1978; Nelson, 1982; Nelson and Meranto, 1977; Pettigrew, 1972, 1976; Stone, 1968). The second election contested by a viable black candidate is usually marked by a slight drop in black turnout and a larger drop in white turnout. A combination of reduced mobilization of the white racist vote and conversion of moderate whites generally enables a black candidate to win a substantially higher proportion of the white vote in the second electoral outing, producing a better overall showing for the black contestant (Pettigrew, 1976:18).

The disintegration of the Stokes organization in Cleveland suggests that the period following a black mayor's first election can be anticlimactic for city residents, resulting in reduced racial tension and even atrophy of the black candidate's organization (Nelson, 1982). Richard Hatcher in Gary has apparently been more successful in maintaining a cohesive base of support, owing

to general satisfaction with his performance within the black community (Keller, 1979; Nelson, 1972). The recent accession of a black mayor, Ernest Morial, in New Orleans appears to have been less traumatic than in some other cities because it had been preceded by the progressive administration of Moon Landrieu, who was popular with the black community and tried to pave the way for a black successor (Schexnider, 1982).

The extensive experience with black mayoral campaigns has yielded a number of general rules of thumb concerning the ingredients for successful black candidates. Among the critical factors are high black turnout and a solid bloc vote among blacks; endorsement of the black candidate or a neutral stance on the part of the city's principal newspapers and broadcast media; and an attempt by the black candidate to win over significant white support (Stone, 1968:223-224).

Converting these lessons into strategic guidelines, Thomas F. Pettigrew notes that it is essential that the black candidate obtain a higher percentage of the white vote than the white candidate obtains of the black vote. This can be achieved by emphasizing party affiliation; conveying a positive personal image; and targeting white constituencies that tend to be sympathetic to black political aspirations, such as Jews, the college-educated, and the young. Winning over these groups is actually facilitated if a black candidate's white opponent is conservative and openly antiblack. Conversely, a white candiate who "is reasonably liberal and conspicuously careful to run a clean, non-racial campaign" can attract those liberal whites who might otherwise vote for a black candidate (Pettigrew, 1976:27-28). The last caveat helps to explain the comfortable victory of Baltimore Mayor William Donald Schaefer against two black candidates in 1971 (Fleming, 1972).

Lower-income, blue-collar whites are most likely to oppose a black candidate. Pettigrew has explained this phenomenon in terms of "fraternal deprivation," which is to say that these voters tend to see their group's status falling relative to that of blacks and take out their resentment through racially oriented voting. One specific fear fueling this opposition is the sentiment that "powerful blacks in high office will prove antiwhite and openly discriminate against whites in jobs, services, and taxes" (Pettigrew, 1972:106). Variations on the slogan "a candidate for all of the people" were prominent in several Republican campaigns against black Democrats in 1982 (Cavanagh, 1982), and may have been designed explicitly to play upon this dynamic.

Black mayors have been perhaps the single most visible symbol of black progress in the electoral arena. The increasingly high proportion of black residents in many inner-city areas will probably be reflected in the increasingly routine success of black

citywide candidates in the years to come. The social and economic deterioration of many cities in recent decades has led some analysts to portray this prospect as a hollow prize, however. The difference between the electoral and economic power bases in most American cities can lead to perplexing difficulties of governance for black mayors. As Mack Jones has noted:

> The economy is dominated and controlled by white interests which benefit in varying ways from the inequitable status quo which black voters expect the newly empowered black leadership to reverse. Given the nature of local government financing, however, black elected officials need the support of these same white elements in order to maintain existing levels of services, not to mention increasing them significantly. At the same time, the white business and commercial elite needs a sympathetic city government to accommodate its plans for economic growth and development. Jones, 1978:109

These constraints require a black mayor to be responsive to elements outside the black community. Making a virtue of this necessity can create opportunities for innovative political styles on the part of black politicians, a point to which we shall return.

Nonetheless, it remains a truism that black candidates must rely for the most part on black votes in order to attain elective office. Nearly 60 percent of black officials came from black-majority jurisdictions in 1980. It is interesting to note that this represents an increase from 46 percent in 1971 (Table 7). In other words, proportionally fewer black officeholders were elected from predominantly white jurisdictions in 1980 than in 1971. This change is somewhat difficult to interpret, although it may simply reflect the increasing prevalence of heavily black urban areas due to "white flight" during the 1970s.

The relationship between the size and racial composition of election jurisdictions largely explains the concentration of black officials in small jurisdictions; as a general rule, the larger the jurisdiction, the smaller the black proportion of the total population. That is, most black officials from relatively small jurisdictions (25,000 persons or less) represent predominantly black populations, while most black officials from larger jurisdictions (such as congressional districts, large cities, or states) represent predominantly white populations. We may therefore infer that in most large electoral jurisdictions black candidates must broaden their appeal past the black community to a substantial segment of the white community in order to win elective office. In fact, according to Conyers and Wallace (1976:131-134), black officials reported that they received greater election assistance from the

Table 7. Black proportion of population of jurisdictions with black elected officials, 1971 and 1980.

Blacks as percentage of population	Percentage of black officials 1971*	Percentage of black officials 1980
0	1	1
1-9	10	6
10-19	12	9
20-29	11	8
30-39	12	9
40-49	9	10
50-59	8	10
60-69	8	11
70-79	7	10
80-89	8	8
90-99	11	15
100	4	4
Total	101	101
(N)	(747)	(1,407)

* Source: Conyers and Wallace (1976:66).

white community in jurisdictions where the black population was relatively small than in jurisdictions with large black populations. Conyers and Wallace also found that black officials felt they received greater support from the black community as well when blacks comprised a relatively small percentage of the population. Perhaps the necessity of a comprehensive effort to attract white support encourages attention to interracial mobilization efforts by black candidates in such areas.

Nature of the Election System

Aside from the black proportion of the population, the single most important factor affecting black electoral prospects

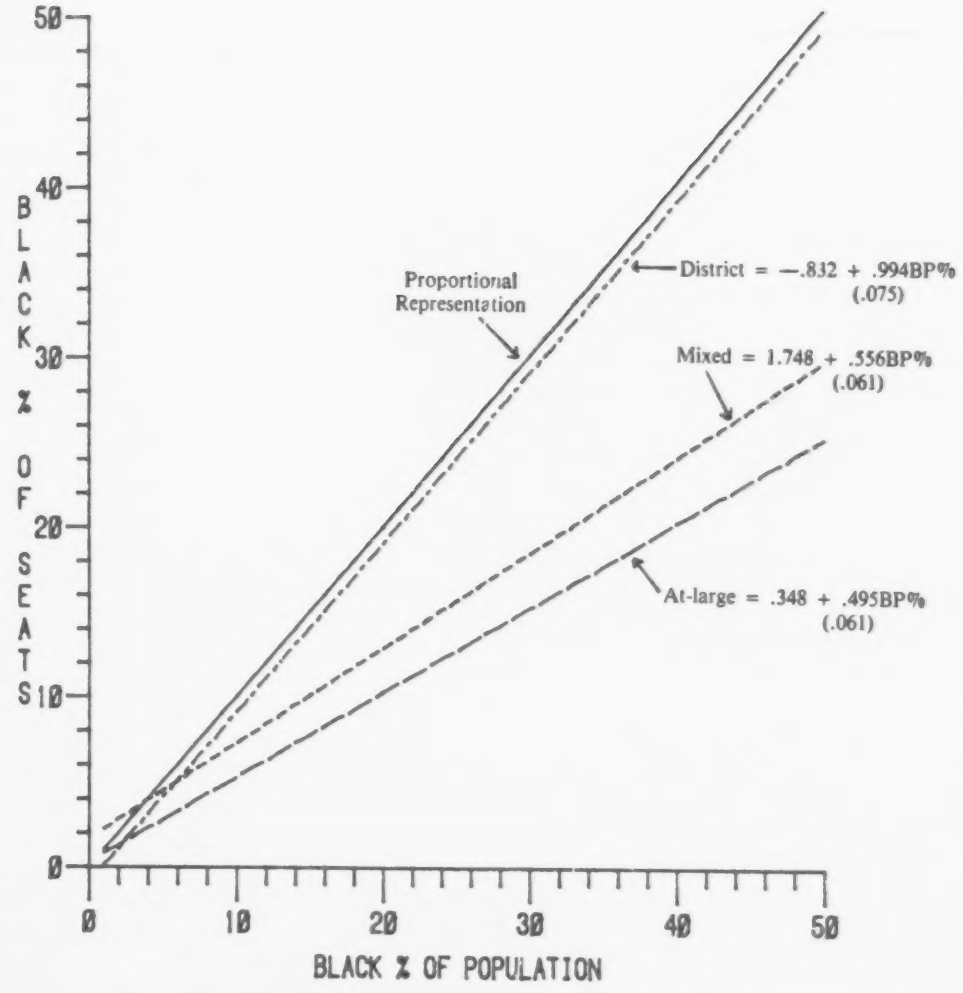
is the nature of the election system. Black candidates are far more likely to succeed in a system of district elections than in a system of at-large elections or a hybrid system combining aspects of the two. As can be seen from the bivariate regression plotted in Figure 2, the expected percentage of city council seats held by blacks in cities with district elections is almost identical to the black proportion of the population in those cities. In cities with at-large systems, on the other hand, blacks can only expect to hold about half the seats to which they would be entitled if they were represented in proportion to their share of the population. Mixed systems are only marginally more favorable to the election of blacks (Engstrom and McDonald, 1981). The only nationwide study contradicting this finding (MacManus, 1978) has been convincingly refuted on methodological grounds (see Davidson, 1979).

The explanation for this pattern is simply that blacks tend to be concentrated in a few readily identifiable sections within most cities or counties. Thus, while blacks may constitute a minority within a large jurisdiction such as an entire city, they are likely to constitute a majority in smaller units such as districts or wards. A black candidate running citywide for a council or school board seat frequently faces "many of the same racially oriented difficulties now experienced by black candidates for mayor. . . . Basically, blacks in at-large elections must receive solid black support while gathering sizable numbers of white votes as well" (Kramer, 1971:460).

Southern cities are far more likely to have at-large systems than are cities outside the South. This factor has been shown to explain much of the apparent underrepresentation of blacks on southern city councils and school boards (Jones, 1976; Latimer, 1979; Welch and Karnig, 1978). Indeed, the use of at-large representation has been so pervasive a means of institutional racism in the South that the judiciary has taken an increasingly dim view of the practice (Derfner, 1972; Halpin and Engstrom, 1973; Jewell, 1964; Wasby, 1982).

One factor mitigating the negative effect of at-large representation to some extent is the size of a representative body. The greater the number of seats on a city council or school board, all other things being equal, the more likely it is that blacks will be represented in proportion to their presence in the population (Jones, 1976; Taebel, 1978; Welch and Karnig, 1978).

The relationship between electoral systems and black candidate success is so strong that it remains even when the demographic characteristics of the electorate are taken into account. The socioeconomic resources of the black population have an independent effect on black representation, however. The most important factor appears to be black income, either absolutely or relative to that of the local white population



Source: Compiled from Population-Policy Data Base, Florida State University, and 1970 Census of Population.

Note: The overall adjusted R^2 is .54[illegible] and the within group adjusted R^2s, which legitimately can be compared given the similar standard deviations for the black population percentages (for districted, 13.7; mixed, 12.3; at-large, 13.2), are .816 for districted cities, .510 for mixed cities, and .344 for at-large cities.

Figure 2. Relationship between black percentage of population and black percentage of city council in different electoral formats (reprinted, by permission, from the American Political Science Review 75: 348).

(Engstrom and McDonald, 1981; Karnig, 1976, 1979), although black educational level emerged as a significant variable in one study (Robinson and Dye, 1978). As Karnig has noted:

> For blacks to succeed in electoral politics, socioeconomic resources are critical. Where they have resources more comparable to those of whites, blacks tend to be more successful. The story of American elections, whether at the local or at a higher level, has largely been one of marshaling private-sector resources in order to obtain public-sector office (Karnig, 1976:233).

The presence of a sizable black middle class generally implies not only a source of campaign contributions, but also an organizational network that can be mobilized for political purposes (Karnig, 1979). The greater disparity between black and white incomes in the South than in the North is therefore an additional factor hampering black political progress in the South, for it not only depresses black registration and turnout rates, but also limits the economic and human resources available for political campaign activity (Karnig, 1979:145). The validity of this generalization was graphically demonstrated by the organizational difficulties plaguing Robert Clark's unsuccessful 1982 congressional campaign in the impoverished Mississippi Delta region (Cavanagh, 1982).

4. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the characteristics and distribution of black elected officials and the factors affecting black electoral success during the course of the past decade. Black officeholding is no longer as rare as it was prior to the Great Society and the Voting Rights Act. The number of black elected officials continues to increase year by year, although the dramatic rates of increase seen in the 1960s are unlikely to be repeated.

The typical black elected official is a middle-aged, highly educated, upwardly mobile male affiliated with the Democratic party. This profile is changing in several significant respects, however. Black women are becoming more prominent in politics. Black Republicans are becoming increasingly rare. The most dramatic black political progress is being made in the South. And black officials are becoming more likely to hold office in predominantly black jurisdictions.

Projecting these trends into the future can be hazardous, but a few developments appear very likely to continue. The most politically important trends concern the distribution of black elected officials among types of jurisdictions. The largest gains in black officeholding will probably be concentrated in two very different types of constituencies: the rural South and the urban North. In the South, the extension of the Voting Rights Act will ensure that the dilution of black voting strength through legislative gerrymandering and other means is minimized. This should greatly enhance the prospects for electing black congressmen and state legislators in areas with heavy, but evenly dispersed, black populations. In the North, the continuing demographic patterns of "white flight" and the concentration of minorities in inner-city areas should result in increasing numbers of black municipal officials, as well as new black districts in Congress and state legislatures.

Black suburbanization is another trend to watch. For example, Prince Georges County in Maryland is increasingly

populated by middle-class blacks holding white-collar jobs in the Washington area, and the long-term prospects for electing a black congressman from this area are excellent. As blacks move out to the suburbs, a new cadre of black politicians may emerge who are sensitive to the dynamics of competing for office in a predominantly middle-class, racially mixed environment. Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles, who has downplayed race to stress competent administration and a reassuring family-man image, may prove to be the pioneer in this new style of black politics.

Perhaps the most important question with regard to black officeholding concerns the implications for public policy. Many economists (e.g. Thurow, 1980) now believe that the current condition of economic stagnation is likely to persist for the foreseeable future. America has therefore become a "zero-sum society," where any group's gains come at another group's expense. In such a society, it is particularly important that all groups--and especially groups that have a history of political and economic deprivation--have effective voices in forums where economic choices are made.

The current round of federal cutbacks in social programs, and the collapse of demand in credit-sensitive industries due to anti-inflationary tight-money policies, can be seen as just one means of apportioning the societal gains and losses in a zero-sum situation. Surely other alternatives exist. Black representation is critical to ensure that these alternatives are formulated and given a prominent place on the national agenda.

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Appendix

THE NATIONAL ROSTER OF BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS
1980 Data Form

SECTION I

(Please type or print legibly)

Name: .....

Mailing Address: ....
Number Street/P.O. Box

.....
City State Zip Code County U.S. Congressional District

Telephone Number: ....
Area Code Business Residence

Are you a black elected official? ☐ Yes (If you answer yes, proceed to Section II.)
☐ No (If you answer no, please complete Section I and return to the Joint Center for Political Studies in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.)

If you are *not* in office now, please indicate the reason below:

☐ Did not run for re-election
☐ Resigned
☐ Defeated in last election
☐ Ran unsuccessfully for another office

SECTION II

☐ Male ☐ Female Date of Birth .....
Month Day Year

Please check highest level of education completed:

☐ 0-7 years of school completed
☐ 8 years of school completed
☐ Some high school (9-11 years of school completed)
☐ High school graduate or equivalent (12 years of school completed)
☐ Post high school/vocational school graduate
☐ Some college (1-3 years of college completed)
☐ Two-year college graduate (completed 2 years of community college)
☐ Four-year college graduate (completed 4 years of college)
☐ Post graduate (4 year college graduate and completed at least 1 year of graduate school)

SECTION III

1. Is your office considered to be full-time? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. What is your salary for the position? (per year) $ | | , | | | . 0 0
or
(per day or meeting) $ | | | . 0 0
3. Where you elected in a partisan election (i.e., was your party affiliation on the ballot)? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. What is your party affiliation? ☐ Republican ☐ Democrat ☐ Independent
Other (specify) .....
5. Date of your last election: Month ..... Year .....
6. When did/will you officially take office? Month ..... Year .....
(give date you were/will be sworn in)
7. When did/will your term of office expire? Month ..... Year .....
8. Title of your current office: .....
(example: U.S. Congressman/woman, mayor, county, councilperson, etc.)
9. Name of political jurisdiction you represent: .....
(example: Sacramento County, District 4; Cleveland, Ward 7)

10. What is the size and composition of the population of the political jurisdiction you represent?
    Total Number .....
    Percentage Black .....% White .....% Other Minority .....%
    Name of Other Minority .....

11. Committees on which you serve that are related to your elected office (indicate what leadership position(s) you hold):

.....

.....

12. Area(s) of special interest or expertise: .....

.....

.....

SECTION IV

Developments in foreign affairs have dominated news headlines in recent months. The questions below deal with your interest in and perceptions of U.S. foreign policy as it relates to black Americans. Please respond to each of the questions by checking the statement which most nearly reflects your view.

1. The current level of involvement by blacks in U.S. foreign policy is now
   - A ☐ not high enough
   - B ☐ too high
   - C ☐ just about right

2. Greatly increased involvement by blacks in U.S. foreign relations would
   - A ☐ detract substantially from efforts to deal with major domestic issues of importance to blacks
   - B ☐ enhance the ability of blacks to deal with the major domestic issues of concern to them
   - C ☐ not significantly affect efforts by blacks to deal with domestic policy issues

3. The *primary* reason why blacks have not been more prominently involved in U.S. foreign relations is that
   - A ☐ they lack adequate information about foreign affairs
   - B ☐ deliberate efforts have been made by others to keep them out of the foreign affairs arena
   - C ☐ foreign policy is unrelated to the basic aspirations of black Americans
   - D ☐ none of the above

4. In activities related to my role as an elected official, foreign relations issues
   - A ☐ never arise
   - B ☐ occasionally arise
   - C ☐ frequently arise

5. To the extent that blacks focus on foreign affairs, they should be concerned primarily about
   - A ☐ U.S. relations with Africa and the Caribbean only
   - B ☐ U.S. relations with developing or third world countries only
   - C ☐ the full range of U.S. foreign policy concerns

6. Black economic well-being and foreign affairs are
   - A ☐ related no matter where one lives in this country
   - B ☐ related in some areas of the country but not in my locality
   - C ☐ not related at all

7. With respect to spending for national defense in the coming fiscal year, I think that
   - A ☐ increases are essential
   - B ☐ the present level of funding should be maintained
   - C ☐ a reduction is appropriate

8. I believe that the U.S. should now

A ☐ end all foreign aid programs
B ☐ substantially reduce its foreign aid programs
C ☐ keep foreign aid at its current level
D ☐ increase its level of foreign aid

9. In view of the large and growing number of refugees around the world, the U.S. should

A ☐ substantially increase the number of refugees it admits
B ☐ substantially increase the number of refugees it admits as long as they are admitted on a non-discriminatory basis
C ☐ substantially reduce the number of refugees it admits and encourage other countries to take more
D ☐ continue to maintain the current level of refugee admissions

10. In the future I expect to

A ☐ be more attentive to foreign affairs than I am now
B ☐ maintain about the same level of interest in foreign affairs that I now have
C ☐ pay less attention to foreign affairs

11. In the making of foreign policy the federal government should

A ☐ rely solely on experts
B ☐ involve community leaders and the general public when circumstances permit
C ☐ involve community leaders and the general public on a regular basis

12. In the future, U.S. foreign aid should be distributed with preference for the following countries (*indicate your order of priority by ranking from 1 to 4 with 1 your highest priority*):

___ the poorest of the developing countries
___ developing countries with relatively good human rights records
___ developing countries of special strategic importance to the U.S.
___ developing countries threatened by communist control

SECTION V

In which program areas would you like to see the Joint Center conduct research, training or technical assistance?

☐ Labor Management Relations
☐ Acquiring and Managing Federal/State Grant Funds
☐ Budgeting and Financial Management
☐ Federal/Local Relations
☐ State/Local Relations
☐ Campaign Training and Assistance
☐ Public Policy Issues (Identify) .....
☐ Other (Identify) .....

NOTE: If you are aware of other black elected officials in your area who have recently been elected, please list them below. Include, if known, name, title, address, and telephone number.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

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About the Authors

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